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A Message from Lesley du Toit, Deputy Minister

I am pleased to share with you, in this issue of *Family Matters*, the latest information on the ministry's transformation plans. As the staff and service providers of this ministry, your knowledge and wisdom are some of our greatest strengths as we move forward in the transformation of the service delivery system for children and families in BC, and I am committed to ensuring you receive regular communication regarding our progress, as well as opportunities for continued input.

Lesley du Toit
Deputy Minister

On June 5th, we undertook a visioning session with Aboriginal colleagues and leaders, stakeholders, services providers, senior ministry staff, and representatives from other ministries, to begin the process of developing a shared vision for the future. Additional sessions were held on June 7th and 16th with MCFD Regional and Provincial Office management and other key stakeholders.

As a result of those planning sessions, fourteen transformation goals have been identified. Those goals reflect the themes from the various sessions, as well as direction received from the Premier, government's Five Great Goals, the New Relationship with Aboriginal People and the external reviews undertaken this past year.

The goals, which are listed on page three of this newsletter, will guide our decisions over the next few years.

Your expertise and input as we move forward are critical to our success. Both staff and service providers will have continued opportunities to participate in transformation discussions and processes. Various forums, at both provincial and regional levels, will be set up and will meet regularly over the next four years.

In addition, we have established a generic e-mail address, MCF.DeputyMinistersOffice@gov.bc.ca, to ensure you can pass along suggestions or comments at any time. I would ask that you try to be constructive, respectful and solution-orientated, even when sharing a criticism. Your ideas, feedback, questions and concerns are welcomed.

We have embarked on an important journey together. The work you do each day strengthens and supports the vulnerable children, youth and families of BC. Each one of us, regardless of our role, contributes to our success. We look forward to hearing from you, and to working closely with you in the coming months.

Leadership Statement

Our practice as leaders is based on the following values:

- Respect
- Ethical
- Innovative
- Courageous
- Value Strengths
- Accountable
- Advocacy for Children, Youth and Families

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MCFD and Haisla First Nation Form Interagency

A Kitimat group is working hard to make a difference in the lives of children and families in their area. The group, known as the Kitimat Interagency, is a consortium of representatives from MCFD, the Haisla First Nation and ministry service providers. The group has joined forces to develop programs and services that best meet the needs of those in the community and the region.

The interagency works in cooperation with local government and other agencies to offer the right services in the right locations and ensure funding is used effectively in order to eliminate overlap. This means a wider variety of programs can be offered.

"This group is an excellent example of what collaboration and partnership can accomplish" says Margaret Warcup, Chair of the interagency. "It's about sharing information and communicating openly about what's happening around the community".

The interagency is currently working with Kitimat city councillors to combine the city's economic planning with its social needs. Lori Hansen, Team Leader in Kitimat, says "you can't grow economically if the youth at risk in your community are using drugs in front of businesses. We want to make sure social planning is as important as economic planning".

The Haisla First Nation and the Kitimat Child Development Centre (KCDC) also participate in the interagency. The Haisla First Nation child care centre, C'imo'ca, along with the KCDC and the Haisla Health Centre have jointly developed a protocol agreement to work together to share expertise, train staff and provide mentoring opportunities.

Other initiatives include drug and alcohol services for youth at risk, youth education programs, and partnerships with North West Success By 6® and the University of Northern British Columbia.

"Not only are these projects incredibly exciting to me as a ministry employee" says Lori, "they're important because I'm also a member of the community".

The interagency looks forward to working with more representatives from around the region.

If you would like additional information, please contact lori.hansen@gov.bc.ca.

Meet Deb Foxcroft, Assistant Deputy Minister

I've been in my new position since early June, and I'm very pleased to have this opportunity to introduce myself. I believe we have important and exciting work ahead of us and I look forward to the positive changes it brings for aboriginal children, youth and families.

First, a little bit about me. I'm Tseshaht First Nations, located in Port Alberni, and I've worked with First Nations communities for over 25 years. In 1984, I was involved in the creation of the first delegated First Nations agency in BC. Once the agreement was signed, I became the Director of Usma Nuu-chah-nulth Child and Family Services, which served 14 communities on the West Coast of Vancouver Island. In 1992, the Tribal Council decided to integrate services under one board, and I then became the Senior Manager of NTC Community & Human Services.

Over the last four years, a large portion of my work has been dedicated to chairing the Vancouver Island Aboriginal Transition Team, which supports the transfer of child and family services from government to Aboriginal communities. My goal at MCFD is to continue that work and implement the vision of Aboriginal communities reclaiming responsibility for their children - a vision that has been in the hearts of First Nations for many generations.

To be successful, we need to focus on the best practices that support Aboriginal peoples as they take on their child and family services, and build on their strengths, traditions and values, while increasing our existing capacity to work toward positive change. My hope is that I will bring the voice of Aboriginal people to MCFD to share ideas on what approaches will work for us and by us, and what we may need to create together to make real change for Aboriginal children, youth and families, which they have been wanting to see for many years.

I believe in the ministry's values, and know we have the strong leadership needed to move forward. I'm very excited to be a part of this and I look forward to working with the Leadership Team as well as the many dedicated staff across the ministry in the coming years.

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Ministry Transformation Goals

The following goals will guide us as we move forward and are based on our New Relationship with Aboriginal People, feedback from our planning workshops, the Premier, the province's Five Great Goals, and various external reviews.

1. To establish a value/principle-centred ministry that is respected and trusted by the public, service providers, and those whom the ministry serves.
2. To ensure a confident, professional, empowered staff of MCFD.
3. To ensure a system which is responsive to the needs of children, youth, families and communities, not driven by compliance to rules.
4. To prevent the use of unnecessary red-tape, processes, procedures and rules which slow down transferral of resource and effective service delivery.
5. To devolve service delivery to regions and communities together with the required resources.
6. To ensure that Aboriginal services are governed by and delivered to Aboriginal people by Aboriginal people
7. To have greater focus on prevention and early intervention services.
8. To ensure that importance is given to the full array of multi-disciplinary services to children youth and families.
9. To ensure effective, innovative, and integrated service delivery to children, youth, families and communities.
10. To ensure sufficient human and financial resources for all services.
11. To sustain partnerships of trust and respect.
12. To provide effective management and resourcing of day-to-day service delivery during transformation, ensuring the continued protection and well-being of children and youth.
13. To meet the basic needs of families and communities as a priority.
14. To ensure community engagement and the shifting/sharing of power with communities and families with regard to decision-making and service delivery.

Your MCFD Leadership Team

The new Leadership Team will continue to work with you throughout transformation.

Lesley du Toit, Deputy Minister

Sarf Ahmed, ADM, Corporate Services

Deb Foxcroft, ADM, Aboriginal Regional Services

Doug Hayman, ADM, Regional Services

Alan Markwart, ADM, Provincial Services

Mark Sieben, ADM, Policy & Legislation and Acting Director of Child Protection

Les Boon, RED, Fraser Region

Peter Cunningham, RED, North Region

Chuck Eamer, Acting RED, Vancouver Island Region

Doug Hughes, RED, Interior Region

Donna Knox, RED, Vancouver Coastal Region

Patrick Doyle, Executive Director, Strategic HR

Kelly Gleeson, Director, Communications, Public Affairs Bureau

Nikki McCallum, Director, Transformation Operations

Karen MacMillan, Executive Assistant, DM Office

In Brief

TP Systems Wins Innovative Excellence Award

TP Systems, the developer of the ministry's Adoption Management System, won in the category of "Innovative Excellence: Software or Electronic Serivce Delivery" at the Vancouver Island Technology Centre annual awards banquet held in May.

The awards recognize companies that design innovative software or electronic services that are able to revolutionize a business sector. TP Systems has helped BC become a leader in adoption innovation. Well done, TP!

Paul Butler Honoured by North Vancouver Mayor

Paul Butler, Coordinator of Youth Services, Hollyburn Family Services, received a City of North Vancouver "Outstanding Supporter of Youth Award" from Mayor Darrell Mussatto at a ceremony on May 1st.

Paul has been instrumental in establishing MCFD's Transitioning Youth to Adulthood program, as well as the Hollyburn Hockey Heroes program for at-risk youth on the North Shore.

Congratulations Paul!

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Foster Parent Recruitment Writing Contest

The MCFD Vancouver Coastal Foster Parent Recruitment Team and Hollyburn Family Services recently held a writing contest for foster parents, asking for personal stories of positive fostering experiences to use in ongoing recruitment efforts.

The contest was open to all foster parents in the Vancouver Coastal Region and Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society. Prizes were generously donated by Hollyburn Family Services.

In this issue, we are pleased to share the winning submission, *All's Well That Ends Well*. The second and third place submissions will be published in future newsletters.

TAKE OUR NEWSLETTER SURVEY...

We want to hear from you! Tell us what you think of our newsletter by completing our short survey. Your feedback will help us tailor the newsletter to your interests.

Click here to provide your feedback.

All's Well That Ends Well

I don't like to imagine it as an ending. I think of it as a beginning, and in some ways this day he grew up before my eyes. He came to us after nearly a year in a treatment centre when he was just 6 years old. He was a bright spark with just the right measures of curiosity and mischief.

The good news was that he had grandparents and great grandparents who remained in good, positive contact. The bad news was a mother who chose abusive partners, made poor choices and generally led him down paths that weren't meant for a child.

He lived with us for a year and then moved on, was adopted and headed off into the happily ever after place that foster parents allow their charges to drift into, most often never to be heard from again.

Happily ever after doesn't necessarily last forever for children with the weight of alcohol damage and history of emotional and physical abuse, so when he was adopted all who knew him held their collective breaths, hoping for the best.

The best lasted about four years and when he arrived once more on my doorstep needing care, adoption breakdown in full bloom, I wrapped him in a hug and he replied in kind with a plaintive wordless grip that said "I'm back home. Just love me."

And love him we did. Even when it seemed like he didn't much love us back. Surely it was difficult for him to imagine being wanted when he'd already been caught and released by two sets of parents. We loved him so much we stayed on top of him in his school work and in the community. We set standards and he fought and complained and achieved them all the same. We maintained contact with the school teachers and counsellors well into high school and had rules of the house that other parents thought were rather rigid.

He graduated from high school and thanked us for caring enough to help him learn ways to succeed. He moved out of the house when he was 19 and then some and we wondered where happily ever after would be next. He found work, sustained himself, developed and maintained meaningful friendships and relationships with peers and with girls.

He decided that there must be more than that and attended college for several years. When his path seemed a little directionless he chose one and this morning I watched while he took an oath to serve his country. I consider boot camp and the rigors of military life and wonder briefly if he'll make it. Then I realize that of course he'll make it. He is resilience personified.

Note: The author's name has been withheld to protect the privacy of the foster child.

The Courage to Help

Many of us volunteer our time and energy to help those in need in our communities. But how many of us can say we put our lives on hold to help strangers in a foreign land?

That's what two MCFD mental health professionals have been doing for over five years. Adrienne Carter, a social worker with Child and Youth Mental Health in Victoria, and Lynne Chobotar, an MCFD mental health clinician in Saanich, are volunteers with Doctors Without Borders, a humanitarian organization that delivers emergency aid in over 70 countries. Between the two of them, they have been on an astonishing 14 missions!

Their determination to help others has given them the courage to risk their lives through aftershocks, land mines and the dangers of war to help complete strangers who would otherwise have no one else to turn to.

While the physical impacts of war and disaster are obvious, equally devastating are the invisible effects on a person's state of mind. Once on the ground, Adrienne and Lynne evaluate the mental health impacts on local residents, assess resources available for mental health care as well as hire, train, supervise and support local staff and recruit trauma counselors.

Putting aside their own grief and loss, six local counsellors in training work with Adrienne Carter and her translator.

Alan Markwart, Assistant Deputy Minister of Provincial Services, believes Adrienne and Lynne's "courage and determination to make a difference in the face of enormous challenge and suffering serves as inspiration to us all".

Adrienne's most recent mission was this past October to Pakistan, to help victims of the devastating earthquake. She remembers that it "was truly an emergency mission. The entire city was in ruins and survivors walked around dazed and in shock. Taking care of the injured and providing tents and blankets for shelters became our first priority".

Many individuals also suffered from temporary psychosis due to shock. Some children could no longer speak or eat after losing their entire family, and many wandered the high mountain roads for days with life-threatening injuries. Adrienne was

...continued on page 7

New Framework to Increase Caregiver Supports

Caregivers, foster parent support agencies, Aboriginal agencies and MCFD staff from across the province came together in Richmond on May 3rd and 4th to talk about how to better support those who care for children and youth.

The forum was the crucial first step in launching the ministry's new Caregiver Support Services Framework project. The project stems from suggestions made by regional and provincial stakeholders that the level of integration and coordination of all caregiver services be increased.

"Resource work is often isolating or crisis driven. The forum validated those experiences and provided a place to cultivate hope and explore creative solutions", *forum participant*.

The forum provided those directly involved in caring for children and youth with an opportunity to identify areas to be addressed and set future directions. As a result, a summary of the key themes and recommendations, as well as an action plan, are being developed and will be shared with participants shortly.

For more information, contact Annette.Harding@gov.bc.ca.

SIGN ME UP

Please add me to your electronic distribution list.

Fraser Region Helps Kids Get Conn ected

John Saville and Mary Reagh of the Fraser Region Family Finders Program.

Imagine growing up without knowing your family – wondering if you have a sister, brother, aunt or uncle. You may not know what your mother looks like, where she lives, or even if she's okay.

That uncertainty is what many children in care live with every day. Although they are loved and cared for by others, many have been separated from their biological families since they were very young.

To help some of those children reconnect with family members, the Fraser Region implemented a program last fall called Family Finders.

Originally developed in Vancouver, and carried on by Drew Smith in Victoria, the program's goal is to help children re-establish or create life-long relationships with extended family members, or other significant people in their lives.

"Children benefit from having a connection with family – they feel more attached and have a better sense of belonging" says John Saville, MCFD Community Services Manager in New Westminster.

Family Finders is a group of MCFD social workers who offer hands-on support to other social workers to locate extended family members for children in care. Family Finders works to involve a child's extended family in planning, coordinates assessn support arranges meetings and offers for each family and child.

Since the program began in at success. September 2005, it's had grea ed new Twelve children have develop ker relationships. One social wor to her introduced a 13 year old girl t The girl two aunts and three cousins, with all of made an instant connection ght to them, and one aunt was brou for the tears when she saw her niece first time.

In another case, three children n were introduced to four siblings an d two grandparents. Their grandmo ther had been "praying for years" that s he one day, would be able to meet them gether a and spent a week putting tog scrapbook of photos to share.

"Reconnecting children with their families and building new relationships can be extremely emotional and stressful, but the benefits are enormous" says Mary Reagh, a New Westminster social worker who helped implement Family Finders in the region. "This is the most positive and exciting work I've done in my career"!

If you would like more information on the Family Finders program, please contact:

Mary.Reagh@gov.bc.ca

John.Saville@gov.bc.ca

Drew.Smith@gov.bc.ca

BOOK CORN IER

Fostering to Indepe ndence: A Practical Manual for Foster Parents by Foster Parents

Authors: Debbie Verkerk, M A; Lenox Neher; and Jodi Higgs, BA, B.Ed.

Fostering to Independence was developed in BC to help train and support foster parents, caregivers and social workers in preparing youth for life on their own. The manual is full of practical solutions to help emerging young adults in care be better prepared for independence, with both living skills and self worth intact.

This new publication is receiving rave reviews from foster parents. The manual was developed in consultation with numerous adolescent caregivers and other professionals who work within the care team. MCFD provided support for the project through initial funding, and the Pacific Community Resources Society assisted with facilitation.

In addition to the manual, in-person training is also available for social workers, caregivers and foster parents in their communities and offices.

You can learn more about the manual, or order copies at a cost of $20 each, by contacting fosteringtoindependence@telus.net.

The Courage To Help cont'd...

called on to quickly assess the mental health situation of the victims and then, together with another Canadian social worker, begin recruiting and training local people to assist in trauma counseling.

The work of Adrienne and her colleagues helped build a system that remains in place to help victims deal with the lasting mental effects of the earthquake.

Lynne's first mission with the organization was in 2000, to Tajikistan, working with victims of the civil war. She then went to Kashmir to help those suffering the psychological effects of the intense violence and conflict there.

After taking two years off, it wasn't long before Lynne felt the need to help again. She and Adrienne then went to Southern India after the tsunami where they were responsible for managing the mental health programs along the entire coastline.

While it's extremely challenging to balance their lives here at home and abroad, both claim the work is addictive. As Lynne puts it, "at some point you have less choice in your life because you feel the pull! You give up many things, but it's the most satisfying work either of us have ever done".

Learn more at:
http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org

In Brief

MCFD Staff Win Improvement Award

Catherine Baker, Arthur Rampon and Karen Humphreys, of the MCFD Finance and Corporate Services Branch, recently received a Public Service Agency Improvement Award.

They were honoured for their work in the installation of new printers, as well as their proposal to increase double-sided printing of large batch reports.

Their proposal has led to more duplexing and, as a result, paper is being saved every day!

Ceremony Honours Aboriginal CYMH Planners

On May 9th, MCFD and the Fraser Region Aboriginal Planning Committee honoured Janit Doyle, Matt Edgar, Martha Baldwin and Sheila Wilkins, of the MCFD CYMH Team, for their work in the creation of the new Aboriginal Child and Youth Mental Health plan.

Ray Silver, Chief and spokesperson for Sumas First Nation, welcomed over 125 MCFD and community members to their community longhouse in Abbotsford for the ceremony.

Congratulations to all involved.

Courtenay Youth Services

Located in Courtenay, the Comox Valley Youth Resource Society provides youth between the ages of 12 and 29 with support and services to help them reach their full potential in life. The Society helps them become job-ready, find safe and affordable housing, go back to school and become financially self-sufficient.

Youth Connections, a program offered through the Society, promotes a healthy lifestyle through counselling, social activities, and free computer access.

Youth Connections is currently implementing an outreach strategy to support even more youth in the Comox Valley and has recieved $15,000 from MCFD for their Youth Radio Station. Since opening in 1999, the organization has made an difference in the lives of many youth.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

August 10 - 11: Rethinking Pedagogy in ECED: International Perspectives, Victoria, BC

August 19 - 22: Interdisciplinary Conference on Improving Children's Welfare and Mental Health, Vancouver, BC

Summer 2006 and Winter 2007: Certificate in Infant Mental Health Program, Toronto, ON

Sept 7 - 8: The 1st Regional Conferer.ce on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, Maple Ridge, BC

Sept 13 - 16: Sixth North American Conference on Shaken Baby Syndrome, Park City, Utah

October 1 - 7: Mental Illness Awareness Week

October 2 - 8: National Family Week

October 17 - 20: 8th International Child and Youth Care Conference, Montreal, QC